

Whereas the United States has the highest maternal mortality rate among affluent countries, in part because of the disproportionate mortality rate of Black women;

Whereas Black women are 49 percent more likely than all other women to deliver prematurely;

Whereas the high rates of maternal mortality among Black women span across—

- (1) income levels;
- (2) education levels; and
- (3) socioeconomic status;

Whereas structural racism, gender oppression, and the social determinants of health inequities experienced by Black women and birthing persons in the United States significantly contribute to the disproportionately high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity among Black women and birthing persons;

Whereas racism and discrimination play a consequential role in maternal health care experiences and outcomes of Black birthing persons;

Whereas a fair and wide distribution of resources and birth options, especially with regard to reproductive health care services and maternal health programming, is critical to closing the racial gap in maternal health outcomes;

Whereas Black midwives, doulas, perinatal health workers, and community-based organizations provide holistic maternal care but face structural and legal barriers to licensure, reimbursement, and provision of care;

Whereas COVID-19, which has disproportionately harmed Black Americans, is associated with an increased risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes and maternal and neonatal complications;

Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted issues within the broken health care system in the United States and the harm of that system to Black women and birthing persons;

Whereas new data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has indicated that since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the maternal mortality rate for Black women has increased by 26 percent;

Whereas, even as there is growing concern about improving access to mental health services, Black women are least likely to have access to mental health screenings, treatment, and support before, during, and after pregnancy;

Whereas Black pregnant and postpartum workers are disproportionately denied reasonable accommodations in the workplace, leading to adverse pregnancy outcomes;

Whereas Black pregnant people disproportionately experience surveillance and punishment, including shackling incarcerated people in labor, drug testing mothers and infants without informed consent, separating mothers from their newborns, and criminalizing pregnancy outcomes;

Whereas justice-informed, culturally congruent models of care are beneficial to Black women; and

Whereas an investment must be made in—

- (1) maternity care for Black women and birthing persons, including support of care led by the communities most affected by the maternal health crisis in the United States;
- (2) continuous health insurance coverage to support Black women and birthing persons for the full postpartum period up to at least 1 year after giving birth; and
- (3) policies that support and promote affordable, comprehensive, and holistic maternal health care that is free from gender and racial discrimination, regardless of incarceration: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate recognizes that—

- (1) Black women are experiencing high, disproportionate rates of maternal mortality and morbidity in the United States;

(2) the alarmingly high rates of maternal mortality among Black women are unacceptable;

(3) in order to better mitigate the effects of systemic and structural racism, Congress must work toward ensuring that the Black community has—

- (A) safe and affordable housing;
- (B) transportation equity;
- (C) nutritious food;
- (D) clean air and water;
- (E) environments free from toxins;
- (F) fair treatment within the criminal justice system;
- (G) safety and freedom from violence;
- (H) a living wage;
- (I) equal economic opportunity;
- (J) a sustained workforce pipeline for diverse perinatal professionals; and
- (K) comprehensive, high-quality, and affordable health care with access to the full spectrum of reproductive care;
- (4) in order to improve maternal health outcomes, Congress must fully support and encourage policies grounded in the human rights, reproductive justice, and birth justice frameworks that address Black maternal health inequity;
- (5) Black women and birthing persons must be active participants in the policy decisions that impact their lives;
- (6) in order to ensure access to safe and respectful maternal health care for Black birthing persons, Congress must pass the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act of 2021 (S. 346; H.R. 959); and
- (7) “Black Maternal Health Week” is an opportunity to—

- (A) deepen the national conversation about Black maternal health in the United States;
- (B) amplify community-driven policy, research, and care solutions;
- (C) center the voices of Black mothers, women, families, and stakeholders;
- (D) provide a national platform for Black-led entities and efforts on maternal health, birth, and reproductive justice; and
- (E) enhance community organizing on Black maternal health.

SENATE RESOLUTION 591—EX-PRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF APRIL 10, 2022 AS “VENTURE SMITH FREEDOM DAY”

Mr. BLUMENTHAL submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary:

S. RES. 591

Whereas, in about 1729, Venture Smith was born free in West Africa and, in 1739, was seized from his home and enslaved in New England;

Whereas 257 years ago, in the year 1765, Venture Smith, at the age of 36, purchased his freedom;

Whereas Venture Smith went on to free his family from the bondage of slavery;

Whereas Venture Smith became a successful landowner, businessman, and author in the United States, generations before Black Americans began to obtain constitutional, legal, social, and economic rights;

Whereas, in November 1798, Venture Smith was the first African American to write and publish his own autobiography;

Whereas Venture Smith was the first person to write and publish the phrase, “My freedom is a privilege which nothing else can equal”;

Whereas Venture Smith died a free man on September 19, 1805 in Connecticut; and

Whereas April 10 would be an appropriate date to designate as “Venture Smith Freedom Day”: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate supports the designation of “Venture Smith Freedom Day” on April 10, which would recognize the 257th anniversary of Venture Smith purchasing his freedom and going on to become a landowner, businessman, and author in Connecticut.

SENATE RESOLUTION 592—DESIGNATING APRIL 6, 2022, AS “NATIONAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AWARENESS DAY”

Mr. CASEY (for himself and Mr. CRAMER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 592

Whereas assistive technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of an individual with a disability or an older adult;

Whereas an assistive technology service is any service that directly assists an individual with a disability or an older adult in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device;

Whereas, in 2018, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 1 in 4 individuals in the United States, or almost 61,000,000 individuals, has a disability;

Whereas, in the 2019–2020 school year, the Department of Education reported that there were more than 7,300,000 children with disabilities;

Whereas the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that, among adults 65 years of age and older, 2 in 5 have a disability;

Whereas assistive technology enables individuals with disabilities and older adults to be included in their communities and in inclusive classrooms and workplaces;

Whereas assistive technology devices and services are necessities, not luxury items, for millions of individuals with disabilities and older adults, without which they would be unable to live in their communities, access education, or obtain, retain, and advance gainful, competitive, and integrated employment;

Whereas the availability of assistive technology in the workplace promotes economic self-sufficiency, enhances work participation, and is critical to the employment of individuals with disabilities and older adults; and

Whereas State assistive technology programs support a continuum of services that include—

- (1) the exchange, repair, recycling, and other reutilization of assistive technology devices;

- (2) device loan programs that provide short-term loans of assistive technology devices to individuals, employers, public agencies, and others;

- (3) the demonstration of devices to inform decision making; and

- (4) State financing to help individuals purchase or obtain assistive technology through a variety of initiatives, such as financial loan programs, leasing programs, and other financing alternatives, that give individuals affordable, flexible options to purchase or obtain assistive technology: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

- (1) designates April 6, 2022, as “National Assistive Technology Awareness Day”; and
- (2) commends—

- (A) assistive technology specialists and program coordinators for their hard work